



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

-Iraqi Children Experience Slice of U.S. Culture-

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Salah ad Din Province, Iraq - Summer for many Iraqi children is in stark contrast from the block parties and “glad to be out of school” American kids running through water sprinklers in quiet, cozy neighborhoods.

Instead, many of the children in Hamad Al Shab village spend their days peering through a broken chain link fence that separates them from the main highway near Contingency Operating Base (COB) Speicher where the Salah ad Din Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is collocated with the 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT) of the 101st Airborne Division.



Sergeant Richard Bauman from the Salah ad Din PRT puts together toy airplanes with children from Hamad Al Shab village.

In an attempt to make up for the lack of youth activities in the province, PRT Team Leader Richard Bell recently invited more than 20 children, ages five through fourteen, to participate in a day of fun and activities.

The children got to know both military and civilians working on the PRT, whom they observed from afar but had never approached. The team had plans for a fun day... a laugh, a hug, a slice of pizza and a slice of culture.

After being greeted at the main gate of the COB the nervous children loaded into vans and headed off to what for them was an unknown destination. Once arriving at the base Gym, the children immediately loosened up when they saw soldiers with soccer balls, brightly colored kites, model glider bi-planes and boxes of stuffed animals waiting for them.

Some of the children rushed to the sports field to showcase their soccer expertise while others mastered their kite flying skills or selected and played with their own teddy bear. Word spread quickly that there were Iraqi children on the COB and soon people began to arrive; some bearing gifts and some to play.

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